



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FOLK REMEDIES. — In a pension claim a witness fixed the date of claimant's disability as follows: "About the 10th January, 1865, he was at my house to get some *first shots* to rub on his knees for rheumatism." As I could find no one who could explain this, I wrote to the witness, receiving this reply: "The first shots is the first run made when stilling, or the first whiskey that is run off when starting." My correspondent says further that there are several persons there (Independence, Mo.), who use this remedy for rheumatism.

The daughter of a physician here was persuaded, while on a visit to Bristol, Tenn., to tie a mole's foot to a string which was hung about her baby's neck while teething. Though laughing at the absurdity, she said that the child never kept her awake a single night.

Another lady here prevented her children's taking the whooping-cough by tying around their necks a "green leather string with nine knots in it." Green, I suppose, refers to the condition, not the color, of the leather.

In this last case I presume the magic lies in the number of the knots rather than the material of the string. But the efficacy of the mole's foot, I imagine, is found in the old doctrine of signatures. Like the incipient tooth, the foot burrows about in the dark.

H. E. Warner.

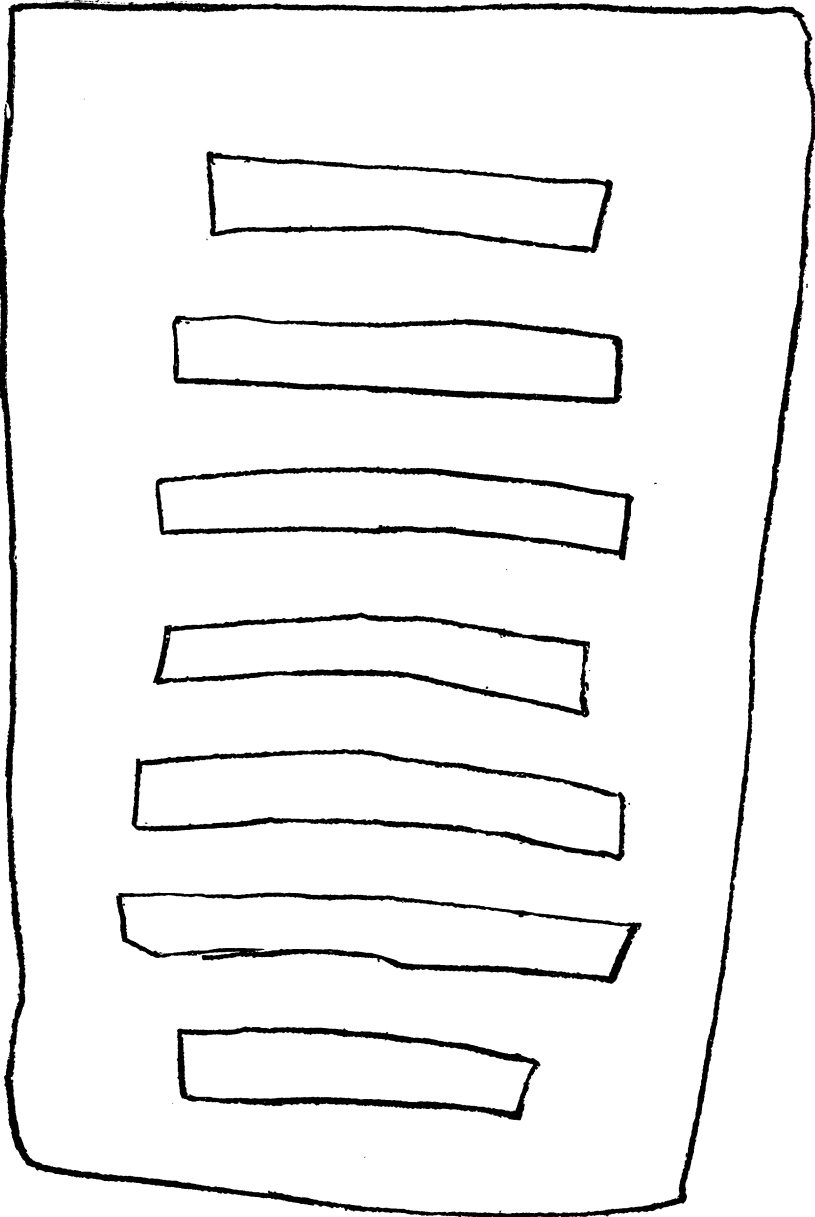
WASHINGTON, D. C.

ALL-FOOLS' DAY IN ITALY. — Mrs. Eustace B. Rogers (*née* Anna North Alexander), writes from Florence, under the date of March 9, 1891, a lively description of a custom evidently allied to All-Fools' Day usages: —

"Last week I noticed groups of giggling, mischievous-looking boys gathered in unusual numbers all over the city; and as a friend and I passed a large group, one little lad sneaked up quietly and pinned onto her dress a slip of bright blue paper cut in a singular fashion, and when we discovered it men, women, and children within a block shouted with glee. It at once occurred to me that this must be the Italian All-Fools' Day, and on inquiry I ascertained that the custom in Florence dates back hundreds of years. The day was *Mezza Quaresima*, in French *Mi-Carême*, or Mid-Lent, which fell this year on March 5th. The pinning on to passers-by of papers cut into rudely shaped ladders is all that remains of the ancient and elaborate celebration of *Mezza Quaresima*. Formerly, on the first day of Lent, a large puppet of an old, hideous woman was hung up in the Piazza Signoria high in air. This represented Lent, a period thoroughly hated by the people, as in those days it meant no music, no flowers, no bright colors in dress, no recreation, but only rigorous fasting and a condition of things that was thought miserable by the light-hearted, fun-loving Italians. To celebrate the happy arrival of Mid-Lent, great crowds assembled in the Piazza, and a long ladder was placed so that a person could reach the puppet, which was then ceremoniously cut in half, amidst the shouts and cheers of the multitude below eagerly watching. The upper half of Signora Lent dangled ignominiously in mid-air until Easter ended the reign of ashes and sackcloth. The little bits of paper, cut into the shape of ladders, are all that now remains of this curious custom. It is suggested that our English

April-Fool's Day was imported from Italy by some one who saw the day, Mid-Lent, fall on April 1st."

My correspondent incloses a bit of blue paper, of which the following is an exact copy, full size, and which was actually used on the occasion described. The resemblance to a ladder is highly conventional.



On inquiry of Prof. T. F. Crane, an authority on Italian folk-lore, I learn that he is not acquainted with this custom, and that it is not mentioned in Pitrè's "Guiochi Fanciulleschi" (Palermo, 1883), nor in "Spettacoli e Feste" (1881).

The origin of All-Fools' Day has been much discussed. Some Oriental scholars derive it from the *huli* feast among the Hindoos, where a custom of sending people on empty errands prevails. Another writer thinks it dates back to the occasion when Christ was sent to and fro between Herod, Pilate, and Caiphas (Bellinghen, 1656). Others have conjectured the custom refers to the rape of the Sabines. The day used to be kept in England on March 25th. John Brand, in his "Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain," devotes a section in volume one to this custom, which seems to greatly puzzle antiquarians.

H. Carrington Bolton.

POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF A NURSERY RHYME.—It is probable that everybody who will read this paper knows the nursery formula of Peter Piper, which is in full as follows :—

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked ;
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where is the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked ?

Well, there lived in Naples in the first half of the seventeenth century a learned *protomedicus* and priest named Peter Pipernus, of Benevento. Now Pipernus, reduced to its week-day clothes, is Piper, or the Latin for pepper. This Peter Pepper wrote a book, "De Effectibus Magicis, Libri Sex," now become very rare indeed, which was published by Colligni, at Naples, in 1647. In it the author assumes that all diseases are of diabolical or magic origin, and are to be cured by religious or divine magic,—that is, by means of medicines which have been mixed while pronouncing pious incantations (he calls them such), and carrying sacred "amulets." Of these formulas to cure diseases there are many pages, such as :—

"Hel + Helci + Adonai + Soter + Emanuel + Sabaoth + Agla + Agios + Otheos + Tetragrammatæ + Imago + Sol + Flos + Vitis + Athanatos + Ischyros + Floy + Lapis + Angularis," etc., etc.

The formula of Peter Pepper is given by Mrs. Valentine, if I mistake not, as a cure for the hiccough, and is included among the spells and charms of the nursery, with that of "Robert Rowley" and "Swim, Swam, Swim," etc. What I conclude is briefly that —

If Peter Piper wrote a book of incantations,
And Peter Piper *is* an incantation,
Was n't Peter Piper number two
Derived from Peter Piper number one ?

And when we reflect that the incantations in both cases are for the cure of disorders, the similarity is still more apparent. I conjecture that the nursery rhyme was written by some jesting scholar, who, having read the work on religious magic, imitated its spells by spelling the master's name